

**Kornelija Mrnjajus, Sofija Vrcelj, Jasminka Zlokovic****Young People in Croatia in Times of Crisis and Some Remarks About Citizenship Education**

In this paper, the authors address the youth as a research phenomenon and present the current position of young people in the Croatian society. The authors exhibit interesting results of a recent study of youth in Croatia and present the results of their research conducted among Croatian students aiming to explore the attitudes of young people and to discover how young people in Croatia develop resilience in times of crisis. They continue with remarks on citizenship education in Croatia and provide an overview of the Curriculum of civic education. Authors discuss whether we are dealing with education for democratic citizenship or rather, with the consequences of the non-existence of education for democratic citizenship in times of crisis in Croatia.

Autorice u ovom radu obrađuju mlade kao istraživački fenomen i predstavljaju trenutni položaj mladih ljudi u hrvatskom društvu. Autorice donose interesantne rezultate recentnog istraživanja o mladima u Hrvatskoj te prezentiraju rezultate vlastitog kvalitativnog istraživanja provedenog među hrvatskim studentima s ciljem da ispitaju stavove mladih ljudi o krizi i otkriju kako mladi ljudi u Hrvatskoj razvijaju otpornost u vremenu krize. Nastavljaju s opažanjima o građanskom odgoju u Hrvatskoj i pružaju pregled Kurikuluma građanskog odgoja. Autorice otvaraju pitanje da li se govori o građanskom odgoju ili radije o posljedicama ne postojanja građanskog odgoja u vremenu krize u Hrvatskoj.

In dieser Arbeit diskutieren die Autorinnen Jugend als Forschungsphänomen und präsentieren die aktuelle Position der jungen Menschen in der kroatischen Gesellschaft. Die Autorinnen bringen interessante Ergebnisse einer aktuellen Studie der Jugend in Kroatien und präsentieren die Ergebnisse ihrer eigenen qualitativen Studie, welche sie unter kroatischen Studenten durchgeführt haben, mit dem Ziel, die Einstellungen der Jugendlichen zu untersuchen und zu entdecken, wie junge Menschen in Kroatien die Belastbarkeit in Krisenzeiten entwickeln. Sie setzen mit Bemerkungen über Lernen für Demokratie und Zivilgesellschaft in Kroatien fort und bieten einen Überblick über Kurikulum des Lernens für Demokratie und Zivilgesellschaft. Die Autorinnen öffnen die Frage, ob wir über das Lernen für Demokratie und Zivilgesellschaft oder, besser gesagt, über die Folgen der Nicht - Existenz des Lernens für Demokratie und Zivilgesellschaft in den Zeiten der Krise in Kroatien reden.

**Keywords:**

youth, youth and crisis, Croatia, resilience, citizenship education

*Dr. Kornelija Mrnjajus* works as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Pedagogy at the University of Rijeka, Croatia. Her research and teaching interests focus on values education, human rights, civic education, intercultural education, sustainable development, educational leadership and vocational education and training.

Email: [kornelija.mrnjaus@uniri.hr](mailto:kornelija.mrnjaus@uniri.hr)

*Dr. Sofija Vrcelj* is a Full Professor in the Department of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science in Rijeka- Croatia. Her research interests are focused on comparative and ethical aspects of pedagogy and feminist pedagogy.

Email: [svrcelj@ffri.hr](mailto:svrcelj@ffri.hr)

*Dr. Jasminka Zloković* is a Full Professor of pedagogy in the Department of Pedagogy at the University of Rijeka. Her research interests are focused on issues of domestic violence, pedagogical aspects of family relations, families at risk and school failure.

E-mail: [jzlokovic@ffri.hr](mailto:jzlokovic@ffri.hr)

Postal address for all authors: *Filozofski fakultet (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences), Sveučilišna avenija 4, HR-51000 Rijeka, Croatia*

**1 Introduction**

The youth in Croatia, in times of crisis, is the topic that recently has drawn attention of both researches and state officials while recent publications have provided solid input for further writing. Considerably more challenging task was writing about education for democratic citizenship in Croatia in times of crisis. Source of data are published reports, information about experimental implementation of civic education in some Croatian primary schools and unofficial results of this project published in the national newspaper. We asked ourselves as to how to write about something that does not exist. That is the reason why we only set forth some remarks on civic education in Croatia and present ideas on civic education expressed through the curriculum of the subject.

The authors' reflections on young people in times of crisis and how young people develop resilience start with discussion about the youth as the research phenomenon. The discussion is followed by the presentation of the

current position, attitudes and behavioral patterns of young people in Croatia through a display of the results of a recently conducted empirical research Perceptions and attitudes of young people in Croatia toward changing reality. The authors also wanted to 'hear' what young people have to say about the crisis and what their vision for overcoming the crisis is. With that aim, the authors conducted a research among Croatian students and presented respective results in the fourth section.

Remarks on civic education in Croatia are introduced with an overview of the short history of education for democratic citizenship in Croatia and followed by the main principles of the Curriculum of civic education. The authors conclude with presenting the results of the recent research conducted among students participating in an experimental civic education program. The results confirm the assumptions and findings of other researches (Mrnjajac 1998; Ledić, Mrnjajac 2000) that civic virtues and knowledge about civic principles among Croatian youth are poor. Combining the results of the researches on youth in crisis and the developments with regard to citizenship education, authors emphasize the importance of continuing education for democratic citizenship.

## 2 Youth as a research phenomenon

Researchers of young people, like John R. Gillis (1999), consider youth a phenomenon of the twentieth century in which the youth forms an important social group. Young people create their own history, patterns of behavior and ways of thinking. The most important traditions of youth, such as student radicalism, subcultures, delinquency, experimenting with lifestyles and the like, have been developed, according to Gillis, in the twentieth century.

Young people represent a special (research) phenomenon because they reflect problems and they are a vulnerable group but, also, they generate changes. For example, the Croatian history, when being part of Yugoslavia, was marked by student protests and the so called Croatian spring in the late sixties and early seventies of the twentieth century. Students were the most radical among the groups demanding the demonopolization of the existing federal institutions and the liberalization of political reforms. As of the proclamation of independence till 2008, students practically did not exist as an organized political force in Croatia and people often mocked the students saying the only thing they complained about were the prices in student restaurants. The first student initiative was the anti NATO initiative, when 125.000 signatures were collected to support a referendum against the Croatian accession to NATO. This initiative was followed by a protest organized by students dissatisfied with the Bologna reform. Since 1991 that was the largest student protest in Croatia. The same year, a student protest against commercialization of education was organized. In the spring of 2009, students occupied, i.e., blocked the classrooms at their faculties. That was one of the most

massive European student resistance that year. The second blockade was in November. In the spring of 2010, students organized a protest regarding free education, which had positive results as in their third attempt they won a free master study for all and free first year of bachelor study. In 2010, some students supported the academics who gave a strong stand to the new higher education and science laws. In 2011, students participated in a large scale anti-governmental protest against capitalism and joining the EU. The youth (student) protests are sporadic, start with huge enthusiasm but as fast as they start they also cease. They do not involve the entire student population. Most of the student population disagree with student resistance, considering that they should be silent and work. More than twenty years after the proclamation of independence, the Croatian society has still been in transition, which is a process resulting with great instability and insecurity in all areas of life. In particular, social differences, inequality of opportunities and great economic uncertainty may be noticed in all age groups, and this especially applies to young people. Young people express their concerns for their present and future life in different ways, often with a sense of lack of prospects. The youth reflects many difficulties of a particular society, which can lead them to risky behaviors, i.e., generate a series of problems for a longer period of time (Zloković, Vrcelj 2010).

There is a tradition of empirical studies of the youth (thematically broad set of researches of the youth in Croatia were conducted from the 1980s to the mid 2000s involving young people across the country; Radin 1988; Ilišin, Radin 2002, 2007; Ilišin 2005) in Croatia. Studies have shown that the transition period brought more risks and uncertainties rather than new and broader opportunities for the young people. Previous analyses have shown that young people in countries in transition are faced with a series of processes that hamper their proper integration into the adult world, such as the rise of social differences and inequalities of educational opportunities, escalation of competition in the labor market with rising unemployment and precarious labor, increase in crime and risky behaviors, decrease of health care quality, collapse of the former and slow installation of different social values. Thereby, the intergenerational transmission of values weakens and the socio-economic importance of family resource strengthens (Wallace, Kovatcheva 1998; Ule et al. 2000; Roberts 2003). This is confirmed by the results of the recently conducted empirical research Perceptions and attitudes of young people in Croatia toward changing reality aiming to identify and analyze some of the attitudes and behavioral patterns of young people in the contemporary Croatian society (Ilišin et al. 2013). The research was conducted by the Institute for Social Research and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Zagreb, and it was conceived and carried out by Shell model studies of the youth (Shell Youth Survey). The sample included 1500 examinees aged from 14 to 27 years (born between 1985 and 1998) from all over the country. Most of the

respondents were full-aged (mean age 20.9 years) whose childhood or early socialization took place in the turbulent 1990s. Results of this study confirm the findings of series of empirical studies dated in the past two decades. It turns out that the coming generations have withdrawn into privacy, developed a stronger orientation to family and reluctance social and political engagement as a reaction to the increasing uncertainty in their socio - economic environment.

### 3 Youth in Croatia in times of crisis

In Croatia, term youth embraces persons between 15 and 30 years, i.e. young people are persons "between" children and adults. Although the age is the primary criterion that "generates" collective identification, it should be noted that young people are quite a heterogeneous group because very different ideological orientations, difficulties and needs, differences with regard to the place of residence can be identified within it. This leads to the conclusion that the youth are a group that does not stand collective identifications (cf. Bužinkić 2010, Štefančić 2010). In Croatia, as in most European societies, the unfavorable demographic trends are present. From 1953 to 2001, the proportion of young people (15-29 years old) in total population decreased from 27.7% to 20.6% (Ilišin et al. 2013, 11). Situated between two relatively hard to define and easily recognizable periods of life, childhood and adulthood, youth is recognized as an unstable and ambivalent developmental period which requires special care and supervision of adults. Therefore, it is realistic to expect that care and work with young people should be an important part of state policy. In some countries, work with youth resulted in so-called young people government policy (Ule et al. 2000). In Croatia, the National Program for youth from 2009 - 2013 is integral as part of the activities of the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth and the Law on Youth Councils which encourages the active engagement of young people in public life. Despite the declarative level, the actual level of concern about young people seems to be substantially different.

Along with the problems that affect young people in both the developed and in the former socialist countries, today's generation of young people in Croatia grew up in a society marked by war traumas and modest economic development, and they mature in circumstances of economic decline and high personal uncertainties. In Croatia, 83,800 young people aged 15 - 24 years are out of the school system and have no job. Thereof, around 20,000 teenagers, or 8% of young people are 15 to 19 years old. Thereby, Croatia is at the top of the charts between Romania and the United Kingdom (Gatarić and Beti 2013). According to data from the Croatian Employment Service, at the end of 2011 there were 104,273 unemployed young people aged 15 - 29 years and 139,770 aged 15 - 34 years, and in late November 2012 there were 121,228 unemployed young people aged 15 - 29 years, or 160,272 up to 34 years. Regarding the youth unemployment, Croatia holds the inglorious

second place in Europe, behind Spain, and outnumbering Greece. In 2012, in Croatia 60% of 130,000 unemployed young people did not have a single day of service in their profession. A disturbing fact is that in Croatia in October 2012 there was as much as 22,728 unemployed persons having master's or doctorate degree. According to the latest data from the Croatian Employment Service, 51.8% young people were unemployed in September 2013. Unemployment and poor financial situation are the reasons why young people in Croatia become independent with great difficulties. The results of the 2011 census show that as much as 70,000 more young people live with their parents than in 2001. As much as 354,863 young people aged over 25 years live in households with their parents and thus being treated as 'children'. They live with their parents until the age of thirty, they do not have great prospects for their own home, and since they are unemployed bank credits are unavailable to them. These are some reasons why they are reluctant to marry and to have children. Depression, asocial behavior, fears, hopelessness, promiscuity and various addictions are only some of the problems that afflict today's young population, both worldwide and in Croatia. The facts show that suicide is one of the three leading causes of death among young people aged 15 to 24.

Results of the most recent research on youth in Croatia in times of crisis (Ilišin et al. 2013) show that one third of young people live in families experiencing everyday difficulties in covering essential needs, every seventh respondent lives in a family at the edge of poverty, while 14% of young people live in households whose monthly expenses are up to 2,500 Kuna (approx. 330 Euro). A car and a computer were a luxury for their parents, and to them they are basic needs in order to be mobile and connected. Households with young people on average own 1.23 cars and one computer (0.93). Young people in Croatia still highly regard traditional family values based on marriage and matrimonial communities which they plan to establish in the future, however every sixteenth young person plans to avoid starting a family. Years of late youth, i.e. 30 years of age for men and 27 years of age for women, are considered to be the best age for marriage. Most of them plan to have two children. Croatia has still been a country of low mobility. Two - thirds of young people tend to educate themselves in educational institutions in Croatia, while only a third of the respondents would decide for overseas education. Despite the hard economic situation and high unemployment rate, young people in Croatia show a decline in the tendency to migrate internally and externally. In 1999, 61% of young people expressed desire to leave the country (Štimac, Radin, 2002), while in 2013 only 27% expressed such a desire.

Young people mostly spend their leisure time in activities related to fun and entertainment that differ with regard to their socio - economic status and value system. Most of the time they use the Internet and their real life friends are replaced with virtual friends. Their

monthly costs include (branded) clothing, shoes and accessories (on average 216 Kuna, approx. EUR 28), hanging out in bars and restaurants (202 Kuna, approx. EUR 27), and the phone/cell phone bill (117 Kuna, approx. EUR 15). They spend very little time watching movies in the cinema and/or purchasing DVDs (35 Kuna, approx. EUR 5) and buying books (20 Kuna, approx. EUR 3). This indicates the priorities and habits of young people—good looking appearance and being well presented is important and this requires adequate “equipment”, they meet their friends most commonly in cafes and cell phones are devices from which they do not separate themselves. It is very important to make a good impression and to build a certain image. For them, it is more important to look good and to find a potential spouse than it is to build a successful career. Almost a third of young people believe that consuming marijuana is modern, about 30% of them are smokers, and nearly half of young people consume alcohol once a week or even more often, and believe that alcohol is acceptable or necessary for belonging to a certain social group. Unfortunately, alcohol has still been a socially very acceptable addictive drug in Croatia, and this opinion is shared by most young people.

Young people express the highest level of confidence towards people closest to them such as family members, friends and relatives. This is followed by trust in colleagues, neighbors, people of other religions and those of different political persuasions. Young people express reservation toward religious leaders which might indicate a dose of criticism that young people harbor toward institutional authorities. Values which young people admire most are dignity as a desirable existential goal and tolerance and fairness as desirable behaviors. The fighting spirit is a value that also occupies a high position. This represents the desirability of active and independent ways of achieving goals. Social status is a value that is not particularly widespread among young people, as well as materialistic orientation, or the acquisition of wealth. The value of innovation, which is often associated with youth as a creative social resource is rated poorly. Despite the relatively high valuation of tolerance, young people proved to be quite intolerant, especially against homosexuals and some ethnic groups (i.e. Roma, people from Eastern Europe, China, the Balkans). Young people generally believe in all four of the Christian truths (God exists, God created the world, there is a heaven and hell, God is the source of moral rules and duties). Most of them celebrate religious holidays, more than a third prays, a quarter are churchgoers, every sixth young person goes to confession and every tenth on pilgrimages.

The distinctive patterns of political behavior of young people are observed and they are generally observed in comparison with the elderly (Ilišin 1999; Norris 2004; Fahmy 2006). Young people distance their-selves from politics, especially institutional (conventional, formal), which manifests through low interest in politics and below average participation in political institutions and

processes. If, and when they get politically active, they are more prone to non - institutional political action: from various forms of protests to engagement in civic associations and actions. They are more prone to taking radical political positions and are potentially liable to various forms of political manipulation and instrumentalization (Henn et al 2007; Ilišin 1999, 2005b; Ilišin et al. 2013). Very few young people see a connection between the social and political engagement and their own prospects; readiness for social and political participation is extremely poorly rated. This is in accordance with the finding that political parties, parliament and government enjoy a very low level of trust among young people. Strategy that promises success in personal development is considered to be a pragmatic adaptation to the environmental conditions, confidence in their own strengths and reliance on family support.

Young people are more uninterested than interested in politics whereby they are more interested in politics in the EU than in the Balkans. Interest in politics grows linearly with age and level of education of young people and their fathers. Young people gather information about political events via television. Mostly they do not discuss politics with their parents and they do not know how to assess whether their political views match the views of their parents. On the ideological scale in Croatia, the left - center party has the most supporters, whereas young people slightly incline to the right center. Many pre - election polls showed that young people are more prone to electoral abstinence, which is often encouraged with a sense that they cannot affect the work of governmental institutions. Most young people believe that their generational interests are very poorly represented in the political sphere. The confidence of young people in social and political institutions is relatively low (Ilišin 2005b; Sekulić, Šporer 2010; Ilišin et al. 2013). Young people express the highest level of trust to the police and the judiciary, which can be linked to the ongoing fight against crime and corruption.

At the forefront of the scale of problems that are, in the opinion of young people, particularly disturbing in Croatian society today are the problems of socioeconomic and existential nature (unemployment, increasing poverty, insecurity). This is an indication that young people are aware of the social reality in which they live. Fear of deteriorating health, legal uncertainty, the spread of crime and environmentally irresponsible behavior follow the above mentioned. Rather frequent evictions of Croatian citizens, climate changes and terrorism are problems they fear the least. At the top tier of political priorities on which Croatian government should focus, young people put reduction of youth unemployment, fight against crime and corruption, and economic growth and development. However, most young people still consider social justice, human rights, and improvement of social status of women and youth as very important issues. This indicates that, despite the democratization of Croatian society, satisfactory results





in the elimination of various inequalities—social, gender, generational—still has not been achieved.

Young people are mostly concerned with socio-economic problems, which is an indication that they are aware of the difficulties Croatia is facing. They wonder how long the current situation will last and how it will impact their individual life chances. Despite everything, young people are optimistic regarding the economic future of Croatia and personal future in the next 10 years. The data illustrate the well-known imbalance between social and personal optimism/pessimism, which is characterized by the supremacy of personal social optimism (Ilišin 2011). This persistent tendency leads to the assumption that young people draw their optimism regarding their personal future from the hope that “time is working for them”, i.e., from expectation that there is still enough time in front of them to achieve their life goals. Results show that moderate optimism about economic future is prevalent in almost all subgroups of young people, so it seems that the vitality of youth is a strong barrier to ominous forecasts of economic and other analysts. This is good news from the standpoint of society because it indicates that youth is not affected by utter dejection and the sense of lack of prospects. Most of the young people agree with the Croatian accession to the EU, and one out of five students is against. The youngest respondents are less likely to support European integration of Croatia. This is disturbing because they will potentially spend most of their lives in Croatia as a member of the European Union. Most young people expect positive effects after Croatia’s accession to the EU. Fears caused by the country’s accession to the EU that young people express are compatible with expressed hopes. They fear the negative socio-economic consequences more than threatening to the sovereignty and identity of the state and nation. However, optimism about the future of European Croatia still has been more present among young people than pessimism.

#### **4 Voice of the youth in times of crisis, outcomes of a qualitative study among Croatian students**

Viewing the youth as a social potential (for a change), we tried, contextualizing youth not only in age but also in the structure of the Croatian society, to examine the attitudes of young people towards the crisis and their vision for overcoming the crisis. The study used a qualitative methodological approach with a questionnaire as a primary research method. The questionnaire had three open-ended questions. The sample included the target population of students, who may be considered a protected group because they have certain rights which the unemployed youth are deprived of. For the research, the authors selected the students studying to become future higher primary and secondary school teachers. One of the reasons for selecting this group was the fact that in Croatia teaching is the profession connected with greater social sensitivity and acceptance of poorly paid work without larger prospects. The study was conducted using the questionnaire on a sample of

students—future higher primary and secondary school teachers—at the University of Rijeka, which was completed by 85 respondents (approximately 17% of the total number of such students). Out of the total number of respondents, only 8.5% were men, which confirms that teaching has been becoming a majority female profession. The average age of the respondents was 22.3 years.

The questionnaire contained three open-ended questions (What is your opinion on the crisis in Croatia? How do you see the way out of the crisis? How do you deal with the crisis?) aiming to find out what the crisis means to respondents, how they deal with crisis and to how they see a way out of the crisis. This served us as a criterion for the analysis and categorization of the responses. Given the number of respondents, the conclusions cannot be generalized, but the answers are indicative because they confirm the results obtained from the survey conducted on the population of young people in Croatia (Ilišin et al. 2013). Some answers are not quite correct in terms of Croatian grammar and style. The authors maintained the original construction of sentences in transcription in order to avoid any misinterpretation and prevent influencing the answers. Also, in translation we wanted and tried to keep the original construction. In analyzing the answers, the authors did not find differences between different groups of students (regarding age, sex, study), which is the reason why we have not included the independent variables in the interpretation. We used frequencies instead of percentages because respondents often gave a few groups of answers in one answer. In analyzing the answers, we used the total number of students that mentioned a certain group of answers.

#### **4.1 Youth opinions about the crisis**

The largest number of respondents (45 of them or 53%) link crisis to the economic aspect which subsume the difficult situation in the country, government incompetence, lack and loss of jobs and unemployment. Respondents contextualize the crisis at the global level but also in the context of Croatia. Unlike global context that derives a shortage of jobs, local, Croatian context of crisis is characterized by the following features: high taxes vs. low incomes, lack of progress, which means that without nepotism we cannot thrive, crime, corruption, defective system, disorganization, false promises and stealing at all high positions, hopelessness, helplessness, fear, anger, stress, insufficient money for living, inability of average Croat to earn for a decent daily life. Respondents also commented the role of media and political speeches that emphasize crisis and thus causing mass hysteria. They call themselves “lost generation”, aware that they will face insecurity of market (economy), often change the job and do not have their own place to live and with “bitter picture of homeland”.

Unemployment is also seen as a considerable problem (33 respondents), (lack of employment opportunities, lack of jobs, job loss, and unemployment of elderly



people). However, respondents (17) said that it was difficult to separate the economic crisis from other "forms" of crisis, so in Croatia we can talk about crisis in human relations, in understanding of morality, tolerance, empathy and other aspects that are important in daily life of an ordinary (grass roots) citizen. Respondents point out the lack of tolerance in the micro-cell of society – the family, which is seen as a place of tolerance, love, warmth and support. The definition of marriage has been a topical issue in Croatia. On December 1st 2013, Croatian citizens voted on a referendum whether the definition of marriage as a community between man and woman should be incorporated in the Croatian Constitution. Many see this initiative as meddling in minority rights. Public opinion is divided.

Respondents are aware of the great impact of the crisis on social life. They notice that neighbors are not talking anymore, that humanity disappears because people are afraid for their own existence, anger, stress, aggression grow and people are more distant and crueler. For such a situation they blame the media and politicians stating that they use terms such as 'recession' and 'crisis' in order to manipulate masses. Under moral crisis, the respondents purport the lack of necessary critical dimension towards global values that are imposed. In this regard, the crisis of "mind" is stressed, which is dominant in Croatia because we accept everything uncritically. Respondents define crisis as distrust in institutions that do not function according to the purpose they exist for. That is, according to the respondents' opinion, manifested in the way that those who are responsible do not want to find a way out of the crisis. Responses indicate the critical perception of crisis that encompasses all aspects of life and all layers of society. The respondents' answers indicate that the political establishment is at the same time economy elite, disconnected from and desensitized to the crisis just because of their own position. A substantial number of respondents detect the source of the crisis precisely in the Croatian political establishment.

Respondents (7) indicate the paradox when it comes to the crisis in Croatia, that is, they indicate significant social stratification which is manifested with individuals crossing the poverty line, living in poverty, not having the basic conditions for life on one side, and on the other side people that live on standards of rich people. Along with commenting various aspects of the ongoing crisis, respondents "transfer" the crisis to the future. They are aware future generations will have to pay off the current large external Croatian debt and even those not born yet will also live in crisis. Respondents (11) also expressed pessimism (global dissatisfaction, disorientation, stress, intolerance, depression, suicidal tendencies). Other features of the crisis in Croatia that the respondents (13) mentioned are: high taxes, low income, lack of progress, leaving Croatia, the inability to achieve the goals, crime, corruption, violence, human hopelessness, helplessness, fear, anger, stress, high goals, and too small resources. Four respondents stated that the crisis is fictional.

#### 4.2 Youth opinions about a way out of the crisis

The analysis of the responses as to how they see the way out of the crisis showed a greater dispersion of answers than the question about the crisis. From the responses received, we can see that young people are aware of (they perceive) all the problems in the country, and they make some suggestions for changes that might help coming out of the crisis as soon as possible. The respondents see the exit from the crisis in all aspects of life, what is to be expected since the crisis affects all aspects. In addition to interventions that are usually the responsibility of the Government and the Parliament (oust politicians and those who run Croatia, the statesmen must find the way out, honest people in the government, a government that takes care of the citizens, that politicians stop being greedy, drastic changes at the top, joining the EU, when the state starts to function as a whole, expertise of competent people, quality leadership; 18 respondents), respondents (14) mention distrust in possible ways out of crisis, and are predominantly pessimistic.

The respondents (9) see a possible way out of the crisis in larger investments in education and the change in the educational policy, investments in young people and in educating young people to think. Closely related to education, which in this context should be understood as an investment as well, is, at the micro and macro (global) levels, increase of investments (17 respondents) that would produce a "domino effect". It would cause the raise of economic base and stimulation of domestic production and development of industry. Since the crisis did not affect all population structures, respondents (11) propose changes in tax and fiscal policy (taxes on the rich, lowering the rate of VAT, taxes on Church, to stop borrowing, proper use of money, to live sustainably in accordance with their own capabilities, thriftiness, give up the luxuries and live simply). Respondents (3) also observe a distinct moral crisis and they mention the importance of the change of moral values, i.e. return to "essential" values (such as love, family, friendship, understanding, tolerance, freedom). Although respondents provided many constructive solutions, they are rather pessimistic and believe that the crisis is very deeply rooted and will only deepen. Some respondents ignore the crisis, i.e. do not think about it. As one of the solutions, a part of the respondents (4) see the leaving – "escape from" – the state.

The respondents (13) observed the non - recognition of young people and their competences and suggests that those in power give a chance to young people and keep them in the country through opportunity and security of employment after their education. However, we must also mention the number of respondents (7), who take a positive attitude and believe in a better tomorrow. Young people are also aware of individual responsibilities (10 respondents) and state that it is important to help others, to be persistent, work and strive, to solve their own problems and to raise awareness. As "another" way out of the crisis they see



the reduction of wages of those who sit in the Parliament, and not to those who do not have; filtration of media; new ideas and solutions; that other help us; going out in the streets; protests; cooperation of all institutions; that all adhere to the rules, or in not thinking about the crisis.

#### 4.3 Youth opinions about resilience

A large number of respondents (31) stated they do not feel the crisis, i.e. they do not feel it, but their parents do. Answering the question 'how do they deal with crisis' 8 respondents expressed ignorance when it comes to crisis and some respondents (20) find the solution in optimism and positive thinking. However, in these optimistic answers we find traces of helplessness and wandering as to how long such an optimism will last. They find support in their age, youth, and hope of having more time and a life ahead of them. Despite the positive attitude, some respondents expressed fear whether they will find a job after they graduate and expect a harsh blow of reality if they decide to stay in the country.

Some respondents stated that it is difficult to cope with the crisis. To help parents, i.e. ease the burden on them, respondents work during their studies and this solution adversely influence successful studying. Young people find security in their family. Respondents (5) state that they are lucky because their parents work and can pay for their education. As one way of coping with the crisis, respondents (19) mentioned thriftiness, i.e. rational disposal of finances and 5 of them consider leaving Croatia and moving to countries where educated young people are respected as one of the solutions. As other ways of coping with the crisis, respondents mentioned the performance of their own obligations, understanding, to be without excessive expectations, dissatisfaction, they live from day to day, they are used to it, making people aware, isolation from people who are in the "machine", preservation of old, traditional values. One respondent answered "purchasing rolling tobacco instead of cigarettes". This response reflects the growing phenomenon among the population of smokers in Croatia, i.e. purchasing of tobacco and "rolling" cigarettes at home as it is much cheaper than buying ready-made cigarettes.

#### 5 Remarks on citizenship education in Croatia

Croatia just went through its first referendum initiated by Croatian citizens. The question was if the statement "Marriage is a community of a man and a woman." should be incorporated in the Constitution. The majority of voters declared their consent with this proclamation and it will be incorporated in the Constitution. The fact that some anonymous person(s) can finance a civil initiative that results in changing the Constitution and that the majority is not concerned by the fact that it is not known who stands behind is frightening. Frightening is the fear that some people feel of people who are different in any way, expressions of anger, rage and hate on the faces of mostly young people screaming at the

participants of the LGBT parade. Frightening are the Ustasha greetings at the end of football games, at music concerts; young people wearing Ustasha symbols and high school graduates taking photos in front of the swastika symbol. Should we worry about a civil action that collects signatures for a referendum with the aim to change the Constitutional Law on bilingualism of national minorities?! And these are only a few recent events. Result of non-existing or non-systematic education for democratic citizenship and at the same time rationale for the development of civic education.

Education for democratic citizenship is not mentioned in strategies of any political system that Croatia was a part of until the proclamation of independence in 1991. At the beginning of the 1990s Croatia established its political system according to democratic principles, yet formal acceptance and implementation of democratic principles was not sufficient to put the democracy into effect. Over the last fifteen years, Croatia developed a model of education for democratic citizenship that is organized as a part of informal educational efforts, primarily driven by civil society organizations and some higher education institutions with a mission to help young people to become competent and responsible citizens of the democratic society.

Formal consideration of education for democratic citizenship began in 1999 when the Croatian Government adopted the first National program for human rights and democratic civic education. Governmental decision (Class: 004-04/99-01/05, Reg 503018-99-17, from 14th October 1999) obliged the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport to implement the decision. Implementation of the program remained voluntary until 2012, when the new curriculum of civic education was completed, and the Minister issued a decision on its experimental implementation. In the meantime, in 2005, the Education Sector Development Plan 2005 - 2010 was enacted. It emphasized the importance of democratic principles and promotion of active citizenship. One of the results of the Plan was the Croatian National Educational Standard, passed in 2006, which introduced human rights education and education for democratic citizenship. In 2008, a proposal of National Educational Curriculum was introduced mentioning civic education. The implementation of civic education was experimentally introduced in the school year 2012/2013 in twelve Croatian schools, eight elementary and four secondary schools. This experimental introduction of civic education in Croatian schools will last for two years, and the plan is to introduce civic education as a subject in all Croatian schools in the school year 2014/2015. In six schools, the program is implemented by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport and Education and the Teacher Training Agency, while in the other six schools, in areas of special state care, by the Croatian Youth Network with IPA project partners Center for Peace Studies, Center for Human Rights and GONG. As of the school year 2014/2015, civic education will be a mandatory subject in all primary and secondary schools

in Croatia and the official Curriculum of Civic Education should be published by the end of June 2014.

### 5.1 Curriculum of Civic Education - competency oriented education

Curriculum of Civic Education is based on the principles of National Educational Curriculum, which brings many changes in the Croatian educational system. The National Educational Curriculum introduces learning outcomes and competencies as the most important characteristics. This document states that the previous formative principle of teaching and learning for acquisition of reproductive knowledge should be left behind and it introduces the principle of content planning based on learning outcomes aiming to enable students to act competently in different areas of life. Learning outcomes orientation should ensure an individualized approach to learning, so that each student can get to know her-/himself, discover his/her own strengths, gain self-confidence and become aware of the conditions where she/he can successfully learn and act. Competence, as one of most important terms, is defined as "set of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, personality traits, motivations and patterns of behavior which an individual disposes of and that, if necessary, may be executed in order to successfully solve certain problem or task" (Kurikulum građanskog odgoja 2011, 3). Curriculum (2011, 4) defines a competent person as a person that knows and can do, but also acts in accordance with his/her own knowledge and skills, not because she/he must, or because it yields only material benefits, but because she/he believes that such action is right and good for her/him, for the work she/he performs and the community in which she/he lives, who knows how to balance personal and common interests. Civic competence becomes one of the key learning outcomes.

National Educational Curriculum defines civic education as an inter - disciplinary topic that contributes to the "training of students for active and effective performance of the civic role" (Kurikulum građanskog odgoja 2011, 5). This implies, among other things, the development of student democratic awareness and encourages their active and effective participation in the development of democratic relations in school, local community and society, as well as in solving global problems on the principles of democracy, justice and peacemaking. Civic competence consists of three interrelated and dependent functional dimensions which are defined as civic knowledge and understanding, civic skills and abilities and civic values and attitudes. Content dimensions of civic competencies are defined in relation to the rights and responsibilities assigned to member(s) of different communities—from local to national, European to international, and they are: political dimension; social dimension, which includes communication skills, conflict management and learning and emotions management; human rights dimension, which includes human rights, gender equality, combating child trafficking and humanitarian law; socio - entrepreneurial

dimension, which includes anticorruption and consumer protection; environmental and cultural dimension, which includes issues of identity development and strengthening of interculturality. Dimensions are based on the Council of Europe Recommendation on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights CM/Rec (2010)7.

Changes in orientation from formative acquisition and reproduction of knowledge toward learning outcomes and competencies are more than welcomed. Indicative is the fact that in year 2012 teaching and learning in Croatian schools are still driven by learning for pure reproduction of knowledge. In regards to Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains, we could say that Croatian students mostly stay on the first, possibly second level, which does not meet the demands of the current market. One reason for a high unemployment rate of Croatian youth can surely be found in this fact.

### 5.2 Structure of the curriculum of Civic Education

The Curriculum of Civic Education is designed spirally according to cycles and can be implemented in several ways depending on the age of students and the needs and capacities of individual schools or local communities. It consists of four cycles—three cycles in primary school and one cycle in secondary school.

It is proposed that students conduct research projects addressing active and responsible citizenship in all areas of social life as part of the school curriculum for the last two years of secondary school.

This Curriculum emphasizes that the implementation of civic education in schools will improve the entrepreneurial spirit, children will develop a better understanding of self and society, they will be able to observe the law and the children will be educated to fight against corruption from primary school onwards. Introduction of civic education should significantly improve the quality of education but also create the conditions for active participation of students in civil society after graduation. Since numerous studies have shown that our young generations are often uninterested in certain social events, the aim of the civic education is to eliminate the prejudices on diversity and, what is particularly important, to develop students' self-awareness and responsibility, to be responsible and active participants in society. Through such civic education students should gain elementary knowledge about democracy and their social role in such environment, they will be educated about their rights and obligations, how to balance self-interest and common good, they will be familiarized with terms such as social solidarity, social justice and fairness.





Cycle	1 <sup>st</sup> cycle	2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle	3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle	4 <sup>th</sup> cycle
Grade	1 <sup>st</sup> till 4 <sup>th</sup> grade of primary school	5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> grade of primary school	7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grade of primary school	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade of secondary school
Implementation	Civic education content shall be mandatory, inter-disciplinarily, extracurricular and through school and community projects in the scope of 35 school hours a year.	Civic education content shall be mandatory, inter-disciplinarily, extracurricular and through school and community projects in the scope of 35 school hours a year; modular approach.	Civic education can be an optional school subject, shall be taught in the scope of 35 school hours a year.	Civic education is mandatory school subject.
Content	Focus is on the student as an active and responsible members of the school and the local community. Students should develop knowledge, skills and attitudes about dimensions of civic competence; they should be able to collaborate, communicate, be familiarized with their own strengths, develop self-confidence and respect for others and diversity, develop ethical values of justice, solidarity, equality, incorruptibility, and respect for their own and the work of others.	Students deal with specific issues or areas of civic education, as well as the basics of democracy, the role of the citizen survey, social and communication skills, ethical decision making, gender equality, identity development, intercultural understanding, mediation, consumer rights, etc. Students learn how to solve interpersonal problems and conflicts, how to participate actively in identifying and solving classroom, school and social community problems. The aim is to develop students' patriotic attitude towards Croatia as a country of all its citizens and to develop students' understanding of the connection between human activities on nature and sustainable development.	Learning outcomes of the 1st cycle are extended with learning for citizenship of the national community. The goal is to deepen and apply previously acquired knowledge and skills, and to express opinions relating to the dimensions of civic competencies. At the end of 8th grade of the primary school the students will master the methodology of project planning to address relevant issues of the community, they will have developed homeland and European awareness, character, and recognize and protect their own interests, represent the interests of the community, understand her/himself, others and differences in general. Students will be familiar with the democratic processes in Croatia, Europe and beyond, they will be able to compare them to each other and take a critical stance and present their own point of view, develop participatory communication and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual trust and appreciation. Students will be able to explain and express their own opinion about the importance of family, native, homeland, European and global environment on the quality of overall human living and will act jointly in their own environment in relation to man, society and nature. Students will have a vision of their own future.	The achievements of the first three cycles are complemented with learning for citizenship of the European and the world community. Students should be able to recognize and use the strengths of their own personality and qualifications, to manage their own process of learning, emotions and they will have developed communication and participatory skills and ethical action. Students should also be able to responsibly plan priorities in their private and professional life, linking their own initiative with the realization of their own plans; they will have developed homeland and European awareness in relation to shared values; will be qualified for understanding and participating in global processes on the principles of sustainable development; be able to explain social causes of violence, environmental disasters, poverty, corruption, human and organ trafficking, prostitution, especially children prostitution, critically relate to different types of bias, media, abuses of power; be literate to understand financial management, plan living in accordance with income and expenses, know the basics of lending operations and civil transactions; be able to act independently in their surrounding in relation to man and nature.
Activities	Elections for student council, class president election, preparation of classroom and school rules and the sanctions for their violation, humanitarian work, creative workshops, participation in celebrations (e.g. Mother's Day, Daffodil Day, action Child with special needs is a friend of mine, Volunteers Day, Thanksgiving Day, memorial	Appropriate activities from the 1st cycle and collecting scrap paper/packaging, Foundation of student production cooperatives and gardens, exhibition of paintings and drawings of the local, region and homeland heritage, making regulations on the protection of human rights and measures for offenders, assertive communication skills training, workshops with	Appropriate activities from first two cycles and volunteering, provide peer support, environmental protection, visiting children's homes, children's hospital wards, visit and help in elderly households, classroom and school savings, communication skills training with the emphasis on peaceful conflict resolution, workshops with	Students in projects, as well as on their planning and improvement of the quality of life in the community, keeping logs for analysis of media reports of human rights abuses at the local, state and global level, participation in the creation and implementation of democratic principles in schools and in the wider community, peaceful conflict

	action A light shines for Vukovar in my city, Day of remembrance for the victims of the Holocaust, religious holidays, etc.).	parents, listening, speaking, hearing, making posters, making comics, working on the classroom and the school newspaper, indigenous souvenirs, organic products for school cooperatives, simulation games, and other innovative approaches.	parents, listening, speaking, debate.	resolution, active listening and reflection, argumentative discussion, writing petitions, drafting questionnaires for surveys of target groups about some harmful effects, prejudices and events in their own environment, Croatia, Europe and worldwide. Through research and comparison of development of democracy and human rights elements in Croatia and internationally students should represent everlasting aspirations of individuals and peoples for justice and righteousness, freedom, solidarity and equality of rights, and to analyze the consequences of their violation.
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The Curriculum introduces and proposes new learning methods. Teachers are invited to use interactive and participatory teaching and learning methods; to create and design new solutions for educational processes aimed towards students and more individualized forms of learning—gifted, children with disabilities, different abilities; to find out what the student can be successful in, build on it her/his self-confidence, motivation and success in learning; to facilitate identification of talents as a base for successful learning and planning successful professional development.

Curriculum of Civic Education emphasizes experiential learning. Civic knowledge, skills and attitudes are developed in a way that students are brought into situations in which they judge, assess, resolve moral dilemmas, they witness through their own doing and so internally develop their attitudes and values. The teacher's role is maieutic, based on questions, answers and experiences—he leads students to getting their own conclusions. Teacher who teaches civic education should co-operate with other teachers through different curricular and extracurricular activities, initiation of school and community projects, cooperation with local economy, research development centers, representatives of the political and judicial authorities, humanitarian and religious organizations, civil sector and others. Previous 'policy and economy' teachers should teach civic education when it is a compulsory subject. Some of the proposed new learning methods are: various forms of group work; co-operative learning; workshop learning; social projects in partnership with parents, experts and local authorities; project problem solving and innovation in field of natural and technical sciences in co-operation with developmental centers of companies and scientific research centers; simulated trials in collaboration with the judicial system; volunteer work in co-operation with civil sector representatives; peacekeeping work; workshops of future.

Civic education also effects the development of the personality as experiential learning has multiple effects

on personal development because it encourages: thinking, problem solving and decision making – the search for meaning, deepening of understanding, overcoming challenges; creativity—imagining, reasoning, ingenuity, risk-taking in learning; cooperation with others—collaboration, sensibility for feelings of others, fairness and responsibility; self-management – self-assessment of one's own strengths and weaknesses, setting goals; development of identity and self-confidence; initiative (entrepreneurship); effective learning skills; etc.

The outcome should be the students who know and are able to do the following: explain, accept and implement codes of conduct and respect toward themselves, group members and adults; recognize the importance of knowing the Croatian history and participate in the preservation of local history and Croatian heritage; recognize the right to human dignity and that this right belongs to everyone in the classroom and in the school; recognize their rights and duties, and rights and responsibilities of people in their immediate surrounding; participate in decision-making processes of shared decisions and rules that are relevant to life in the classroom; engage in active cooperation of the school with the local community.

## 6 Conclusion

In recent times that are marked by the crisis, young people have launched a series of activities that are oriented to the (re)traditionalization of values: young students protests against government measures affected the extension of free education at the higher education level; one part of the youth organized a gay pride parade as an expression of freedom of sexual orientation. Since young people are not a homogeneous group, some of their actions often escalate into violence, most commonly at football matches.

As the most common way of dealing with the crisis, young people state the optimism. Optimism as one of the ways used by young people for coping with the challenges of the times they live in is confirmed by the

results of the research conducted by Ilišin et al. (2013). Although they sometimes ignore the situation they are experiencing and do not want to think about it, the responses we received indicate that young people are aware of the social environment, time and space they live in and that they are critical in that respect. They clearly locate the causes of problems and offer concrete solutions. Young people recognize their own, individual responsibility. They are optimistic but their optimism is eventually clouded by pessimism and reflections about uncertainty of their own future, their own helplessness and hopelessness (if others cannot get out of the crisis, how will we?).

The current situation in Croatia and the previous research results prove Audigiers (1996) statement that in times of crisis and difficulty the need for education for democratic citizenship, emphasizing democracy, peace, social justice and human rights, is increased. One of the attempts to prepare young people on democratic changes and activity in combating the crisis is (experimental) introduction of civic education. Nevertheless, the results of research conducted among upper primary and first and second grade of secondary school students who were experimentally included in the civic education program in schools in the school year 2012/2013 with aim to measure the effects of experimental program indicate that level of civic knowledge and civic competence of participating students still has been low despite the program.

According to published information (Spajić - Vrkaš 2014) 54% of students believe that a citizen is a person that lives in the city and only 10% of students give correct answer. One fifth of students said that to have civic virtues means that the citizen behaves civilized, and only one third know that it means to take care of a community. Every fourth student in the seventh and eighth grade of primary school believes that a citizen's main role is to attend his/her personal interests. Half of them are not familiar with the fact that the main role of the Government is implementation of law. Results have shown that students are not aware of the difference between a totalitarian, dictatorial or democratic country. For 25% of students favoring of their own culture is a sign of pluralism. During the examination of social distance toward others, Croatian high school students took the position on the principle—We (Croats and Catholics) and They (all others).

The results of open discussion on content, methods, resources and teacher competencies for civic education (Curriculum is not officially published, teachers did not complete adequate education for teaching civic education), sensitivity of important stakeholders (we can often hear opinions such as: civic education and human rights education are only transient trends; children are overwhelmed and we do not need another subject), unclear aims of civic education, and pressure from 'top' without dialogue (sending message: this program has to be implemented no matter how). The Croatian case can serve as a lesson to everyone that education for

democratic citizenship, with its moral and value dimension, never ends. If we want democracy and tolerance to sustain, we are not allowed to stop our work on civic education for current and new generations.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Croatian: Kurikulum građanskog odgoja. In praxis in Croatia we can find the usage of the term 'education for democratic citizenship' but more common the term 'civic education' is used. That is the reason why in this paper we use both terms. In cases when we talk about a concrete subject implemented in Croatian schools we use literal translation of the Croatian term 'građanski odgoj' which in English is 'civic education'.

<sup>2</sup> Source: on-line reports of Ministry of Science, Education and Sport.